

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In response to the Examiner's Office Action of January 23, 2009 issued in relation to the present Patent Application, the Applicant submits the Remarks below.

Claims 1-9 are pending in the Application. Claim 1 is an independent claim.

Regarding 35 USC 103 Rejections

Claims 1-4 and 7 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Machida (US 7,002,702) in view of Iizuka (US 6,771,385), and further in view of Sekizawa (US 2002/0138612).

Claims 5-6 and 8-9 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Machida in view of Iizuka, and further in view of known prior art.

Claim 1 of the present application requires a value indicative of an amount of the one or more resources consumed to be broadcast to each of the other consumers. The total (ie, total of the values broadcasted and the values received from all the other consumers) is stored in each consumer.

Machida teaches a method of tracking usage of one or more common resources (printer consumables), where the common resources are consumed by a plurality of consumers (PCs). However, in Machida one of the PCs serves as a management server and controls device log information.

Machida teaches away from the claimed invention in that a centralized management is taught. Only one management server maintains the log information. The claimed invention provides a decentralization of information in that each consumer stores the total resources consumed.

Also, in Machida the printer sends a value indicative of an amount of the one or more resources consumed in that printer to the single management server. In contrast thereto the claimed invention requires for each consumer (not the printer) to broadcast a value indicative of an amount of the one or more resources consumed to each other consumer. Thus, Machida teaches a point to point communication (printer to management server) of that value, whereas the claimed invention defines a one to many (one consumer to all other consumers) communication of that value.

Yet further, in Machida respective PCs request from the management server the total and then receive the total. In contrast thereto in the claimed invention the respective consumers do not request any information, but receives the broadcasted value consumed by another consumer. Thus the increment is received rather than the total.

Even though Machida may have an intention similar to that achieved by the claimed invention, the teachings of Machida differ from the claimed invention in every conceivable manner.

With regards the Examiner's assertion in point 4 of the Office Action, that statement is inaccurate in that the PCs (consumers) never broadcast any value. All communication is point to point. It is the printer that communicates to the management server an incremental value. But, even if the PCs stored the values they have consumed, because the values

consumed by other PCs are unknown to them, the total consumed is also unknown to the PCs. Therefore, the modification suggested by the Examiner would still not provide the claimed invention.

In Iizuka all requests to the image forming apparatus 21, 22 and 23 are channelled through web server 13. Data base server 11 obtains statistical information of the image forming apparatus 21-23, information of the state of operation and equipment information in plural image forming apparatuses 21-23 from each image forming apparatus through web server 13, and stores these information. That information may then be analyzed by an application on the Application server 12 to obtain usage statistics.

Iizuka is thus similar to Machida in that it teaches centralized management of consumption information. For reasons similar to those already presented above with regards to Machida, Iizuka also teaches away from the claimed invention.

Sekizawa teaches in paragraphs [0144]-[0145] that agent unit 10 gets status information indicating the operation state of each network printer P connected to its LAN 3a and the toner remaining amount, the ink remaining amount, photosensitive drum remaining life, etc. This information is then compiled into a status mail and addressed to console unit 20. Those status mails are routed via mail server 19.

In Sekizawa only one PC is shown connected to each LAN, but it is assumed there are more than one. Only those PCs connected to the LAN is able to print on printers on that LAN. Sekizawa fails to teach that the consumers (PCs) broadcast to other consumers a value indicative of an amount of the one or more resources consumed, and for a total of the resources consumed to be stored in respective consumers. Sekizawa teaches that each printer maintains that information. That information for each printer is then communicated to a central location, that being the console unit 20. That communication is via agent unit 10 and server 19.

A big difference between the claimed invention and the prior art cited by the Examiner is that the system does not rely on the printer, or a management server, to determine the amount of resources consumed. Each consumer performs that function separately, and independently. This allows each consumer, without any further communication or requests for information, to have knowledge of the total resources consumed.

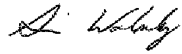
In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the 35 USC 103(a) rejection of claim 1 have been traversed. The 35 USC 103(a) rejection of claim 1 should be withdrawn as claim 1 is allowable over the references as applied by the Examiner. Claims 2 to 9 are dependent on allowable claim 1, and are allowable for at least that reason.

CONCLUSION

Allowance of the present application is respectfully requested.

Very respectfully,

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